

Bureau of Land Management

8 Sept., 2019

Dear Friends,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to comment on Conoco Phillips proposed Willow Field development in the National Petroleum Reserve - A (Alaska).

42 years ago I had the privilege of spending 3½ months living in and working in what was then still called Pet. 4 (Naval Petroleum Reserve 4). I worked on an archaeological survey far to the west of the Willow prospect for the National Park Service on behalf of the Bureau of Land Management. Our field camps were serviced by a helicopter based out of Umiat.

One day I was the only passenger on a flight out to our camp on Lookout Ridge. The pilot looked over at me and said "Ya wanna see the caribou?". I said "Well...sure". Without a second thought he banked hard left and we left our westward course to a northeasterly one. So it happened that I've actually seen the proposed drill site from the air. I should say I sort of saw the site because we were 5000 feet up and 90% of the ground was covered with tens of thousands of caribou. They were on the move running and covered a vast area. As high as we were it was hard to see individual animals so many grouped together made it look as though the very ground was flowing.

The naturalist in me was totally in awe of one of earth's last great animal migrations. The prehistorian in me was thinkin' artifacts... Based on my experience as a long time archeologist in Alaska that this area is rich in archeological sites and that sites in the Far North are generally very fragile like the land they rest on. Any area where dense human activity can be expected should be thoroughly ground surveyed for cultural resources by experienced BLM archeologists before any activities proceed. It has been my experience that it is always

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better to know the status of these things long before project begins. When the artifacts start showing up after work begins things degrade quickly.

Aside from my predictions about archeological site I would feel bad if I didn't point out a couple of other hazards to be found in the Willows. I have a feeling that the reason the herd we saw was racing was because they were being swarmed by mosquitoes. The conditions have to be just right and dense clouds of them go into a feeding frenzy. I was in one and only gloves and a headnet kept me from running in terror.

Now Willow it would appear is very close to the Colville River Delta. This area is the summer home of a significant portion of the world's migratory birds. I guess they like it because it's so remote there aren't many humans to bug them for awhile. While I'm sure the potential operators know about the probable increase avians activity in the area. If they have any idea of supporting their operations with aircraft beware. I nearby became a statistic in a near helicopter / bird of prey mid-air collision and we were nowhere near a major nesting ground.

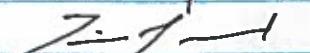
If you were lucky enough to have the herd pass nearby you need to be aware of the inevitable next wave that comes following the caribou: massive grizzly bears. While the Secretary of the Interior may feel he has the last word on what happens in Pet. 4 that would be false. Ursus horribilis is the real landlord all summer.

I've had 40 years to think about this Portugal-size piece of land known as NPR-A. While economist can estimate

the monetary value of fossil fuel values and yield impressive totals I would say that's one way of looking at things. But who is attempting to calculate the value of an intact ecosystem in 2019 when so many others are ~~are~~ threatened around the world.

I encountered many animals who had never seen a human before and were not afraid of me. Have you? If the people making the calls on the projects, the politicians, corporate executives, agency administrators were first required to camp out for a month at the Willow Prospect for a month before rendering any final judgement I'd bet all I have most would shift away from development in Pet. 4. They might come to feel as I do. The place should be left alone. Not only for environmental reasons. The place is special in designated public lands. It is a reserve. It was set aside for future use if necessary. It is my understanding that there is plentiful fossil fuel resources for America currently and in the future. In fact wise people are looking to reduce our consumption still further. I believe the current administration is misguided in opening a national petroleum ~~reserve~~ during an oil glut. It seems like pure greed under the circumstances. It has been reported recently there 1800 wells on the Slope already. Seems like that should be enough to keep the pipeline, which is 15 years past ~~its~~ its engineered life time running til its eventually end.

Sincerely



Tim Sczawinski

P.O. Box 1436

Seward, Alaska